

Press Release

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2019

Contact: Rick Fox, Public Affairs Officer
708-202-5627 – Office
708-5141281 – Mobile
Richard.Fox2@va.gov

Illinois Donor Leaves \$5 Million to Hines VA

Funds to support geriatric research, improved care; provide comforts of home

Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital received a ceremonial check for \$5 million Friday, March 8 as part of a presentation from the estate of Mrs. Rose Serwa. Stanley Serwa, Rose's husband, and her brother-in-law, Richard Mech, were both World War II Veterans who served in the U.S. Army. It was Mr. Mech, who spent time in the Community Living Center at Hines VA before he passed away in 2003, that is the strongest connection between the family and the VA.

Mrs. Joyce Athey, the executor of the estate, niece of Mrs. Serwa and daughter of Mr. Mech, said her aunt wanted to make a difference and she would be proud to see how her life's work will continue to positively impact Veterans long after she's gone.

"Rose would always say, 'I love this country. And I love our Veterans,'" said Mrs. Athey. "She was very private and never wanted this to be about her. I can't help but think that she's smiling to see how this is all coming together."

Mrs. Athey is also happy to see that this donation will help support research, care and new experiences for Veterans who spend their final years living at the VA.

VA provides the essentials for Veterans, but it's through the generosity of donors and volunteers that VA can go beyond those to provide additional services, which will provide an enhanced experience that Hines would be otherwise unable to support. Some of the proposed funding uses include:

- Creating a new Hines Geriatrics Innovation & Research Center
- Renovating multiple dining areas to include enhanced capabilities and resources
- Enhancing outdoor space to include activity areas for Veterans and their families
- Purchasing and installing a state-of-the-art video monitoring system and maintenance contract to decrease falls and related injuries

"Hines VA is here today thanks to a previous donation," said Steven L. Lieberman, M.D., Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health. "Without the generosity of Edward Hines Sr., who 100 years ago donated the property where we're standing today, and later another \$1.6

million for the construction of the original hospital, there wouldn't be a Hines VA to take care of our Veterans."

Hines VA has made significant improvements, including a new boiler plant to replace the original built nearly 100 years ago and exterior improvements, including a new glass and steel façade to the hospital tower, replacing concrete fins that had become a safety hazard.

"VA funding pays for salaries, clinical priorities, and many other necessities for our Veterans," said Steven Braverman, M.D., Hospital Director. "But it's our volunteers and donations like this one from Mrs. Serwa that allow us to provide the extras that allow us to do more. Her generous gift will be used as seed funding to create and sustain a new innovation and research center with a focus on topics of clinical and scientific relevance to aging Veterans. And we'll make improvements to our Community Living Center to make our VA feel a little more like home."

"Today's donation will go a long way to help veterans at Hines, both those who spend their final years at the Hospital as well as the next generation of veterans, and beyond," U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said. "I will continue working to ensure that Hines and VA medical centers across the country have the federal support to continue giving our veterans the care and benefits they earned and deserve."

Hines VA is proud of its longstanding commitment to the care of the aging Veteran, providing programming in Geriatrics & Extended Care since the 1970s. The Hines-Loyola Fellowship in Geriatric Medicine was among the first program of its kind in Illinois when it began in the late 1970s. Hundreds of geriatricians have since been trained by the Hines-Loyola Fellowship and it remains a highly-rated program today. The now renown VA program, Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) was created by a Hines physician that same decade, and the HBPC program has flourished across the VA. The HBPC team at Hines provides interdisciplinary care for more than 500 Veterans.

The Community Living Center (CLC) is located in Building 217, providing both short- and long-term care (skilled, rehab, custodial, restorative) for hundreds of Veterans each year with higher-level skilled care provided in the main hospital tower. Hines also provides out-patient geriatrics care, or Geri-Pact, in Building 217. The Geriatrics Consultation service acts as a liaison between acute care and many other levels and venues of care. Hines also provides chronic care for Veterans with spinal cord injury and related condition from the Rehabilitative Care Facility located adjacent to the CLC.

ABOUT HINES

[Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital](#) is one of VA's busiest and most complex level 1A medical centers, offering primary, extended and specialty care to Veterans. Hines VA is a tertiary care referral center for its region, operating 483 beds and six community-based outpatient clinics in Hoffman Estates, Kankakee, Oak Lawn, Aurora, LaSalle, and Joliet. In 2018, Hines VA completed more than 850,000 appointments for more than 58,000 Veterans.